

Finland's image in Los Angeles, California

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<p>This report studies the image of Finland in the western United States, particularly in Los Angeles. The goal is to find out what kind of image Finland has in the Los Angeles area and what might be the ways to enhance the knowledge and recognition of Finland in the area. In addition, we wanted to find out what, if any, products or companies were known to the respondents.</p> <p>The research was conducted by using a questionnaire that included both qualitative and quantitative questions. This affirmed the receipt of the most comprehensive responses for our research. The scale of the research was quite small, overall there were 40 respondents.</p> <p>Based on our research people had some knowledge of Finland, but its products were quite unknown to the respondents. Some people knew sports figures such as Teemu Selänne, and some recognized Nokia as a Finnish company. Overall, the knowledge was focused on certain public figures and couple of bigger companies. There was no direct pattern to be seen outside the few most common responses. Finnish education and healthcare systems were recognized as affordable and high quality.</p> <p>Marketing was seen as the biggest obstacle why Finland hasn't gained more recognition in the western United States. Most respondents believed that with the right kind of marketing for its products and services, Finland has the tools to succeed in international markets.</p>	
Keywords Destination image, Brand, Marketing, Finland, Los Angeles	

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1 Introduction

The research studies what kind of image Finland has in the United States of America, particularly in Los Angeles, California. The research will give an extensive picture of how Americans see Finland as a tourist destination as well as what kind of values they associate Finland with. The objective is to find out what, if any, Finnish companies are known in Los Angeles and what kind of ways there are to enhance Finland's image. The results will distinguish where Finland might be lacking when it comes to branding and marketing Finnish companies and products, as well as branding Finland as a tourist destination. With the results the objective is to gather information on how Finland's image could be improved globally.

Seeing that Finland is known for its education system, nature and healthcare system, just to name a few, the research will provide insight whether this is also the case outside of Europe. The research will clarify what various groups of people think of Finland, or if the country is even known to the respondents. The results will showcase whether respondents know any Finnish companies, brands or famous people, and also give an idea on how they feel about small countries expanding their brands and business activities globally.

The execution is done by gathering a broad respondent group to answer a questionnaire which includes both qualitative and quantitative questions. The results are then analyzed to see whether age, ethnicity or other demographic features have an effect on the knowledge and image the respondents have of Finland. The respondents are interviewed in different parts of Los Angeles, California. The city of Los Angeles is familiar to both interviewers, which makes the process a little bit easier. After collecting all the data, the results are being analyzed using Webropol.

The Consulate General of Finland in Los Angeles, as well as the Consulate General in New York, and the Embassy in Washington D.C, are all involved in Team Finland action, which aims to create more efficient use of resources for the benefit of Finland and Finnish companies in the US. Team Finland promotes Finland in close coopera-

tion with many forces in business, culture and education. To get more insight, the Consul General of Finland in Los Angeles, Mr. Juha Markkanen was interviewed on his thoughts about Team Finland work and its challenges. He has been involved with the Team Finland work in the United States since his start as the Consul General in fall 2013.

In general the research will give insight on what Americans know about Finland and what misconceptions they might have. Additionally, we discuss how their knowledge of Finland could be improved. Finland being a small country and not so often seen on the news in the United States, it is interesting to see what kind of image people have of Finland and how realistic the image is. The research will also focus on destination branding and how Finland is going to, or should consider, developing their brand in the future.

2 Destination Marketing and Branding

Destination branding needs to be seen as a strategic activity as it is linked closely to destination image. It also demands involvement of destination stakeholders in the design and acceptance of the brand. Destination marketing and branding is both a process and an outcome. The process involves dealing with complexities of destinations and their stakeholders and the outcome is a brand or an image. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 217.)

“A destination brand is a name symbol, logo, word mark or graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination.” (Cooper and Hall 2008, 218.)

A country image reflects the beliefs and impressions people have about a certain destination. Nowadays the term “destination branding” is used in place of “destination marketing”. However branding can be seen as a glue that ties the marketing of a destination together. Marketing is usually done internationally as well as locally in tourism organizations. It brings competitiveness and number of other benefits to a destination. These benefits include; securing the loyalty and emotional link between visitors, coordination of the private sector and other stakeholders, encouraging the promotion of investments, economic development, film and TV, as well as facilitating the use of local products, designs and seamless market communications to the destination. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 218-219.)

In order to be successful in destination marketing, the destination has to think about product and consumption processes. Destinations reflect a certain lifestyle to inspire visitors. Therefore a destination is more than a product. It is a place where tourists and suppliers interact and where tourism takes a place. It has culture and history which creates the tourist experience. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 219.)

2.1 Destination Image

A destination image can be defined as “the attitude, perception, beliefs and ideas one holds about a particular geographic area formed by the cognitive image of a particular destination.” (Cooper and Hall 2008, 223.)

The image is a simplified version of reality. The image is important to destinations since it affects tourists’ perception and the choice of a destination. Destination images are generated differently than the images of other products. Tourists are the ones who generate the image themselves by using different sources of information. The destination marketers have less influence on image creation. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 223-224.)

The image is the only idea visitors have about the destination before they visit. Visitors evaluate the destination in their heads according to the information they have gained. This way they create an image of a place which might or might not be correct. Destination marketing tries to distinguish the link between the consumer decision making and the destination image. Once tourists have visited the destination, their image changes depending on the experience. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 224.)

There are three components of destination image. The cognitive component means that the tourists have a certain attitudes and beliefs towards the destination which leads them to evaluate the attributes in their minds. The effective component shows the value of the destination based on the tourist’s feelings and motives, which determines what they are looking for from the destination. The conative component represents that the decision to visit the destination is made by assessing the first two components. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 224-225.)

There is a difference between reputation and image. Image is the first impression a tourist gets from a destination and it can evolve and change over time, however reputation is more enduring and might be more difficult to change. (FPO 2011)

The destination image is formed by external sources, such as advertisements as well as personal experiences. Media has lot of power in the image forming process. For in-

stance popular culture such as films or documentaries can quickly alter the destination image. People tend to have blurrier images on destinations that are geographically more distant than the ones that are closer. Images change constantly but the change happens slowly, especially destinations with larger images. Often smaller destinations have images that are more likely based on their political parent. The images are used to spread knowledge about destinations, redefine and reposition destinations, enhance positive and decrease negative perceptions as well as target key market areas. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 225.)

Destination marketing goals are to enhance destination image, increase profitability, reduce seasonality and ensure long-term funding. Marketers start by identifying the current position and decide what is wanted the position. Then they will select a strategy to achieve the desired position and start implementing it. However the process is not that simple. They have to distinguish their competitive environment and know the consumer behavior, as well as be aware of the destination's positive and negative associations. Key component in the strategy is the positioning of the destination against the competition. Meaning that the destination has something unique to offer and distinguish itself from its competitors. Capability and resources have to be in balance in order to succeed. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 226-227.)

Many researches show that destination image influences on tourist behavior. The destinations that hold a positive and strong images are more likely to be chosen as a travel destinations. The role of the destination image is to understand the travel behavior, improve the destination marketing activities and measure the process. (Hosany, Ekinci, and Uysal 2007, 3.)

There are several risks concerning travelers and suppliers in tourism. Destination performance risks such as bad weather, labor strikes, grumpy travelers, theft and crimes, terrorism and nature disasters can create a negative mindset. Social risks are unfamiliar situations where the travelers are forced to interact with strangers for instance in coach tours. This might cause stress and affect the travel experience. Then there are physical risks meaning that there might be risk of getting harmed. Travelers also consider if the

holiday trip has been worth of all the money spent on it. There is a high risk that people get disappointed and feel like they wasted the money. These are called financial risks. (Pike 2008, 201.)

2.2 Brand

A brand is a name, a logo or a symbol that identifies goods or services and differentiates them from their competitors. A brand is not just a symbol, it stands for something and it is a promise to the consumer. There are different components of a brand; the brand identity represents self-image and the aspired market image whereas the brand image is the actual image held by consumers. (Pike 2008, 179, 185.)

Destination brand describes the identity of a place. It enhances value, favorability, strength and uniqueness of a destination and can be used to build relationships with visitors or suppliers. (Pike 2008, 181.) The link between destination brand and destination image is clear. Brands represent an image for the consumer. Destination image is part of destination branding since both are perceptual entities. Destination brands should be credible, deliverable, differentiated, hold powerful ideas, be inspiring and resonate with the visitors. For the consumer, brands represent quality as well as reduced risks and lower costs. Branding serves two purposes; the local community and their receptiveness as well as the tourist who evaluates the brand when visiting the destination. The brand should increase its familiarity with repeated exposure to the public. (Cooper and Hall 2008, 229-230.)

2.3 Positioning

”A brand's position is how the brand is perceived in the minds of consumers, relative to competitive offerings” (FPO 2011). Brand positioning should be unique and differ from its competitors. Unlike an image, position can evolve over time and become stronger if managed correctly. There are different ways of positioning a nation brand. For instance by different attributes, by use, by user, by product category, by price/quality and by competitive positioning. (FPO 2011)

Effective positioning can yield competitive advantage to any organization. Destinations should compete with their unique attributes since, for instance a beach can be found almost anywhere in the world. Therefore it is not good enough reason to attract new tourists. Positioning is a tool for shaping brand image and thus destination attractiveness. (Pike 2008, 219) Positioning helps establishing and maintaining the place in the market for an organization. The key term in positioning is brand image. A position describes a product's performance on the market on specific attributes. (Pike 2008, 220-221.)

According to Pike (2008, 222-223) many destination image studies have used more or less the same attributes in their questionnaires. The themes have been nature, culture, value for money, weather, infrastructure, friendly locals, safe environment, activities, cafes/restaurants, nightlife, accessibility and shopping. Destination positioning process has seven stages. It starts by identifying the target market and travel context and is followed by identifying the competitive set of destinations. Third stage is to identify the motivation and benefits sought by previous visitors and non-visitors. Stage four is for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the destinations. After that discovering the opportunities for positioning. Stage six is for selecting and implementing the position and stage seven monitoring the performance over time.

3 Finland in the United States

There are approximately 8 000 Finnish citizens living in the western states of the United States. In total there are approximately 650 000 people in the United States who are of Finnish descent. In addition to this, thousands of professionals and students spend at least some time in America each year. (Consulate General of Finland 2013)

According to data gathered up by Statistics Finland, Finnish enterprises had business activity with 4 617 affiliates located in 119 countries in the year 2011. 6, 3 % of this number equaled the amount of business activity located in North America. Compared to the European Union and Asia who take up more than half of the whole pie, North America is still fairly unknown ground for Finnish companies. Changing this fact and making it easier for Finnish companies to venture out in the US is Team Finland's main goal of work. (Statistics Finland 2011a)

3.1 Finland and the United States

Finland's population according to Statistics Finland was 5 426 674 at the end of the year 2012. According to the 2010 Census data, the population of the United States was approximately 318 million. The United States is the third most populous country in the world with only China (1 355 billion) and India (1 236 billion) being more populated than the US. Out of all 50 states in the United States, California is the most populous, with approximately 38 million residents (2013). (US Census, 2014)

According to accommodation statistics gathered in 2012, approximately 198 000 citizens of the United States spent at least one night in Finland during the same year. Only six countries came ahead in the statistics, all of them countries located in Europe. Russia accounted for 1,5 million of all travelers, Sweden for 537 000 and Germany for 534 000 travelers. (Visit Finland 2012b)

In 2007 a total of 11 billion euros was spent in tourism in Finland, according to data published by Statistics Finland in 2009. Of this amount foreign travelers accounted for

29 % of all travelers. In the same year it was calculated that the tourism sector employed 63 944 people in Finland. (Visit Finland 2009c)

California is the largest state economy in the United States, producing \$2.003 trillion of economic output in 2012. According to research this equals up to the Gross Domestic Product of Italy. California alone would rank up as the 9th largest economy in the world if it were an independent country. Finland's GDP equals to the state of Missouri (American Enterprise Institute 2014)

3.2 Team Finland and the Finnish Tourist Board

Team Finland work was launched as an objective to create more networking for Finland's external economic relations and to create better opportunities between Finnish and American companies with the goal of internationalization of enterprises and investments. Team Finland aims to bring together key actors in Finland and other countries to work together for shared goals that are annually approved by the Finnish government. The core of Team Finland consists of three Ministries; the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition to the Ministries several government-funded organizations and foreign offices are on board as well. Team Finland is being represented by 72 country and region-specific teams worldwide. (Team Finland 2014)

The Finnish Tourist Board, also known as Visit Finland, is an agency that has the goal of actively promoting international tourism to Finland. Visit Finland has identified four conceptual characters by which it leads its work; credibility, contrast, creativity and coolness. In addition Visit Finland follows three tourism themes when promoting Finland. "Silence, please" provides counterbalance to the hectic lifestyle, focusing the promotion on the quietness of Finland and how in Finland things are easy; visitors can stay in a cottage, enjoy a sauna, and explore the untouched natural environment. Second theme is "Wild & Free" which focuses on the adventures Finland has to offer; snowmobiling and dog sled safaris, island hopping by boat to name a few. The third theme "Culture Beat" promotes the Finnish culture in all its uniqueness. (Visit Finland

2014a) In the United States Visit Finland has only one office located on the East Coast. The objective of the global offices of Visit Finland is to market and promote Finland to achieve more global recognition and to attract more visitors to Finland. The promotion is being done through several different approaches, for instance by attending networking events and different travel industry fairs as well as promotion through social media and already existing tour operators and possible future connections. In New York the Visit Finland office is led by Helena Niskanen from Polar Star Marketing Solutions LLC. (Matkailun edistämiskeskus 2014)

3.3 Finnish companies in the Western United States

According to Juha Markkanen, the Consul General at the Consulate General of Finland in Los Angeles, there are approximately 50-100 Finnish companies currently located in California. (Interview 2014) According to Statistics gathered up by Statistics Finland there were 265 affiliates and 36,690 Finnish employees in Northern America in the year 2011. Out of these 265 affiliates 54 were located in Canada and the rest 211 in the United States. (Statistics Finland 2011c)

Table 1. Finnish affiliates in countries outside EU in 2011, the largest industries ¹⁾

		Number of employees ²⁾	Personnel costs (EUR million)	Investments (EUR million) ³⁾	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of affiliates
North America	Machinery and metal products industry (25,28-30,33)	12,370	968.6	21.1	4,072.5	48
	Electrical and electronics industry (26,27,32)	6,810	623.8	166.3	1,430.6	30

		Number of employees ²⁾	Personnel costs (EUR million)	Investments (EUR million) ³⁾	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of affiliates
	Chemical industry (19-22)	6,920	365.4	94.7	2,236.9	37

1) Measured by the number of personnel 2) Annual average 3) Gross investment in tangible asset (Statistics Finland, 2011d)

As seen in the appendix table above, the biggest field in North America is Machinery and metal products industry, followed by electrical and electronics industry and by chemical industry. The machinery and metal products industry employs almost double the amount of people than the second largest industry, electrical and electronics. The top three industries cover 115 out of the 265 affiliates there are in Northern America. (Statistics Finland 2011d)

3.4 Finland's visibility

Lately Finland has been seen on the news on the west coast of the United States with reports covering the quality of the Finnish education system and social welfare network, all in a very good light. According to an article published in Los Angeles Times, Finland's success with PISA tests has even encouraged the US to send delegations to Finland to figure out why the education system works so well in Finland. (LA Times 2013a) This has led to acceleration of international collaboration, the exchange of ideas and the transfer of policies in the education system. The United States is one of the centers of gravity when it comes to research and debate on school improvement, school effectiveness and educational change. (Finnish Lessons p. 97-98)

This year Finland has also been making important ground work when it comes to the Entertainment industry in the United States. Peter Franzen's movie Above Dark Waters was selected to be showcased at the Palm Springs film festival. (LA Times 2014b) Finland also got recognition by the Academy Awards when San Francisco based Janne

Kontkanen received an Oscar for his technical skills for Dreamworks Animation. This was the first of its kind for Finland. In addition to Mr. Kontkanen's Oscar win, a short Film "Do I have to take care of everything?" directed by Selma Vilhunen was nominated for the best short film Oscar. (HS 2014)

Finland was not overlooked in the music industry either. Osmo Vänskä won a Grammy award for the Best Orchestral Performance with the Minnesota Orchestra for their performances of Sibelius' Symphonies Nos. 1 & 4. (Music Finland 2014) The Grammy Awards are an annual award ceremony held in Los Angeles. (The Recording Academy 2014)

A list gathered up in 2013 on the most competitive global economies included both Finland and the United States. Finland is ahead of the United States who ranked up fifth, with Finland being third only behind runner up Singapore and the first spot taker Switzerland. Bearing this research in mind Finland has the potential to become even more globally recognized for their economic strength. (LA Times 2013c)

The US Embassy in Finland and its ambassador Bruce Oreck are also doing their share in helping out companies between the United States and Finland to connect with each other easier. A program called ConnectUSA was launched in an effort to make this happen. ConnectUSA is organizing a tour to at least eight cities in Finland in spring 2014 to educate listeners on how Finnish companies can reach and contact companies of interest in the United States. (Tredea 2014)

3.5 Interview with Consul General Markkanen

Juha Markkanen began his period as the Consul General at the Consulate General of Finland in Los Angeles in fall 2013. Prior to this, he was working for the Ministry For Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, Sweden. Mr. Markkanen has been working for the Ministry since 1991.

Consul General Markkanen sees Team Finland work as a stepping stone for Finnish companies to expand their business activity internationally. Mr. Markkanen describes

Team Finland's mission as an aim to co-operate with different companies and organisations to create mutual value and win-win situations by working towards enhancing Finland's image in the United States of America.

Juha Markkanen's role in Team Finland work is to manage the co-operation between Finnish and American companies in the 13 western states of the United States and to help new companies to enter the US markets. Both of the Consulate Generals, the one in Los Angeles and the one in New York, as well as the Embassy of Finland in Washington D.C. work together with several cleantech, creative Industries, bio/healthcare and life sciences and ICT companies for a common goal. Team Finland also works globally between capitals of different countries.

According to Mr. Markkanen, Team Finland work requires many partners in order to succeed. Some of the most important ones in his opinion are IIF (Invest in Finland) and MEK which both are now part of a bigger company called FinPro, located in Silicon Valley, California. Another important partner located in Silicon Valley is Tekes. As sine other important partners he lists Finlandia Foundation, American chamber of commerce and of course the Consulate General of Finland in Los Angeles. He estimates that there are approximately 50-100 Finnish companies currently located in California.

Consul General Markkanen sees that Finland's image in the United States is good, yet not visible enough. However, he sees that the situation can only get better. As a good example he describes an event called Slush, held in Helsinki last fall, which is created as a networking event for new and young companies. According to Mr. Markkanen the atmosphere at the event was very international, marketing minded and professional and it was clear to see that the new generation of young adults are the ones making the change. He also sees e-commerce as the future and is surprised that many companies are still developing their e-commerce services only because they have to, not because they see the potential and want to be on top of their game. "This is the mind-set that needs to be changed" says Mr. Markkanen.

He believes that what Finland is lacking on is the right attitude and the right kind of marketing for the products and services that Finland can, and is already offering. Finland's business activity has also been based on business to business activity rather than business to consumer practices. When compared to Sweden for example, they have managed to succeed with IKEA, based on the brand they have created, Markkanen believes. Furthermore, Mr. Markkanen sees that Finland's biggest challenge is in marketing. The great potential there is in Finland, is not enough, if Finland cannot push its marketing tactics forward and start selling itself better. "Finns are too self-critical", says the Consul General.

Seeing that it has only been a little over a year since the Team Finland action was established, the work is moving along well, Mr. Markkanen believes. In Los Angeles, Team Finland work focuses on four main sectors, cleantech, healthcare, ICT – information and communications technology, and creative industries. Education field is also important and included in the main sectors as far as resources allow. The importance of having Team Finland in California is huge according to the Consul General. California's GDP equals the GDP of countries such as Italy and Canada, it would almost be foolish to not focus some of the work to California, believes the Consul General.

Looking back on the past year since the establishment of the Team Finland work, Consul General Markkanen feels that it is moving along well and some win-win situations have already been created. As far as measuring the success of the work, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland follows the work closely to see what the actual profitability and success of the work is.

4 Methodology

This chapter covers the theory of the research methods, as well as presents the structure of the questionnaire.

4.1 Survey methods

The survey research requires certain amount of respondents to reply a number of questions that have been determined beforehand. The same questions will be used for all the respondents to be able to compare the results. Data can be collected by interviewing the respondents or having them fill in a questionnaire by themselves. Questionnaire is a good tool for collecting lot of information in a short period of time. Results can be analyzed by finding patterns in the data or by testing hypotheses. Surveys are the most common types of research methods used in leisure and tourism. (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000, 4-5.)

Researches can be qualitative or quantitative. The difference between these two is that the data in quantitative researches are in the form of numbers and vice versa qualitative researches are in form of words. Qualitative research questions are personal, interactive and natural, whereas quantitative are impersonal, controlled and manipulative. Quantitative research can easily reach large numbers of people because it is more simplified. With qualitative research it is possible to collect more complex information but the number of respondents won't reach as high as in quantitative researches. (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000, 8-9.)

Quantitative data can be used to generate hypotheses and develop theory whereas qualitative data is for testing hypotheses. Usually both questions are used in a questionnaire to get more broad answers. It is not possible to collect all the necessary data by using only one of these methods. These approaches work best when combined together. This way the researcher can maximize strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both approaches. In different situations the other method might be more appropriate than the other one or the other might be more dominant as far as the number of questions. Whatever is the case, mixing these two methods can improve the validity of the re-

search tremendously. The term, mixed methods is used when two or more methods are used at the same time in the same questionnaire. Quantitative data will be collected on questions concerning the respondent's age, job and household size for instance. Qualitative data on the other hand is collected on their personal experiences on a particular matter. The term, multiply methods is used when the same question is examined in multiply ways, this should not be confused with mixed methods. (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000, 8-9.)

4.2 Validity and Reliability

A research is usually assessed using terms such as validity and reliability. Reliability is measured by the consistency of the questionnaire. A reliable research questionnaire is simple, clear and will provide same results each time despite who the respondent is. Sometimes the problem in reliability may lie in the researcher. Man-made errors are always possible. Validity assesses whether the measuring instrument, in this case a questionnaire, measures what it is supposed to measure. Internal validity measures if the hypothesis is proven right. Whereas external validity finds out if the research can be generalized to other groups of people or other settings. (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000, 28.)

Ethical questions play an important part when using interview or survey material. According to Vakimo (2010) ethical issues in questionnaires are tied to forming the research relationship to respondents with the pre-information given to them and in the usage of the research material. The problem in both qualitative and quantitative survey material is that once the analysis progresses the first hypothesis may not be applicable anymore thus the respondents may not be aware how their responses will be used in the final analysis. In order to keep the research valid and reliable the researcher must avoid affecting the respondents' answers. When conducting a research the goal is to stay objective and give the respondents the freedom to express their personal thoughts and points of view. (Vakimo, 2010, 102-103.)

According to Joppe (2000) reliability of a study is the extent to which results are consistent over time and how accurate the representation is of the total population. If the

results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. Validity in quantitative and qualitative can be determined by whether the research truly measures what it was intended to measure and how truthful the research results are. Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others. (Joppe, 2000, 1-2.)

4.3 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was created using both quantitative and qualitative questions in order to gain as much information as possible. The questionnaire consisted of three segments. The first segment was about the respondent's personal data, second segment had questions about the respondent's previous knowledge of Finland, and the third segment had a number of statements about Finland to agree or disagree with. After getting all the interviews done, we entered the data into Webropol which helped us to analyze the results.

Structured questions and statements were used to measure the image of Finland. A structured questionnaire consisted of closed questions where a person could mostly answer either yes or no. Such answers are easy to analyze but they do not necessarily show the whole image. Structured questions modify respondent's answers and lead them to think of certain issues.

With quantitative questions we wanted to cover the attributes of Finland. Those questions were made with a Likert scale where the answers were scaled from one to five: one meaning strongly disagree and five strongly agree. There were questions about Finland as a tourist destination. Respondents could agree or disagree with statements concerning Finland's weather, public transportation, people, food, architecture and so on.

The qualitative research questions represented the issues that Team Finland's Promotion Board is dealing with. For instance, we tested respondents' knowledge on famous Finnish companies, products and people, as well as asked what they know about our

healthcare system and education. These questions were open-ended which means that the respondents were able to answer freely and as comprehensive as they wanted.

We tried to interview people from different age groups in order to get as diverse answers as possible. We both had a good idea where and who to interview since the city is familiar to us. We both have lived there for some period of time and nowadays one of us lives there permanently. We spent some time together in Los Angeles this winter and gathered all the information and the interviews.

For the interview with the Consul General Markkanen, we created a separate questionnaire focusing on the Team Finland work and his involvement in it. We clarified how the future looks for the Team Finland work as well as how he sees the image of Finland in the US evolving. The interview took place at the Consulate General of Finland in Los Angeles.

5 Results

A total of 40 Los Angeles based people were surveyed for our research. 23 of 40 respondents were female and 17 male. Out of the 40 respondents 20 said they were in a relationship and 20 were single. Most of the respondents belonged in the age group of 18-30 years old. Age or occupation did not seem to have a significant difference on the knowledge of Finland.

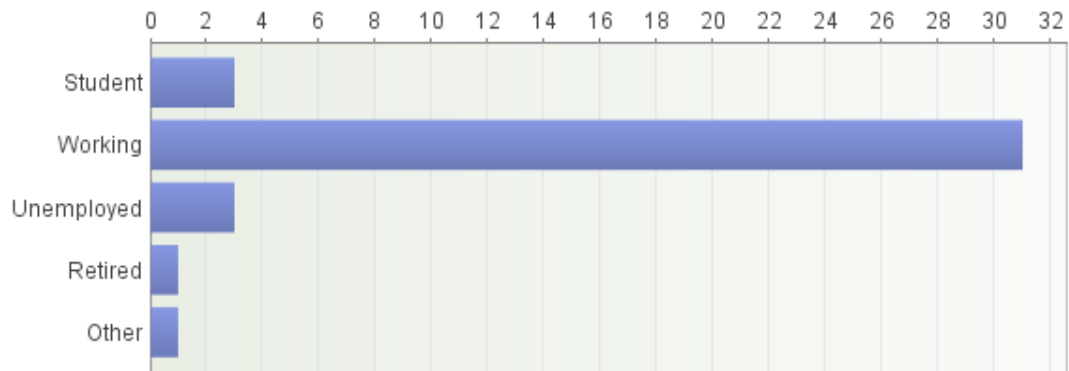


Table 2. Profession

Most of the respondents were workers, with a couple of students, unemployed and retired respondents. 35 of the respondents knew where Finland is located with 4 negatives. One respondent left the question of Finland's location blank. Five out of forty respondents had visited Finland at least once in their life.

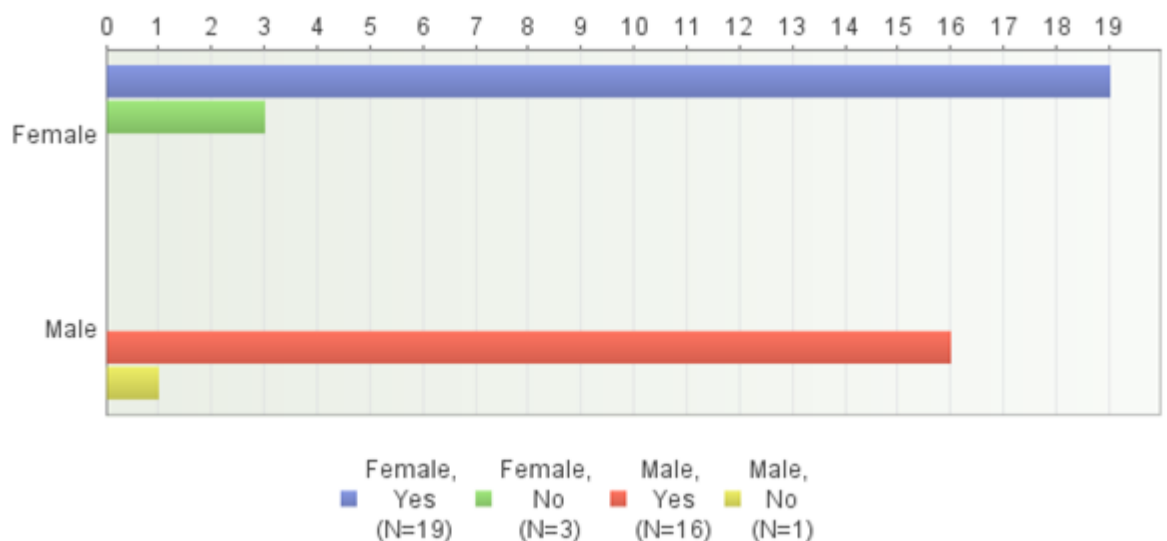


Table 3. Do you know where Finland is located?

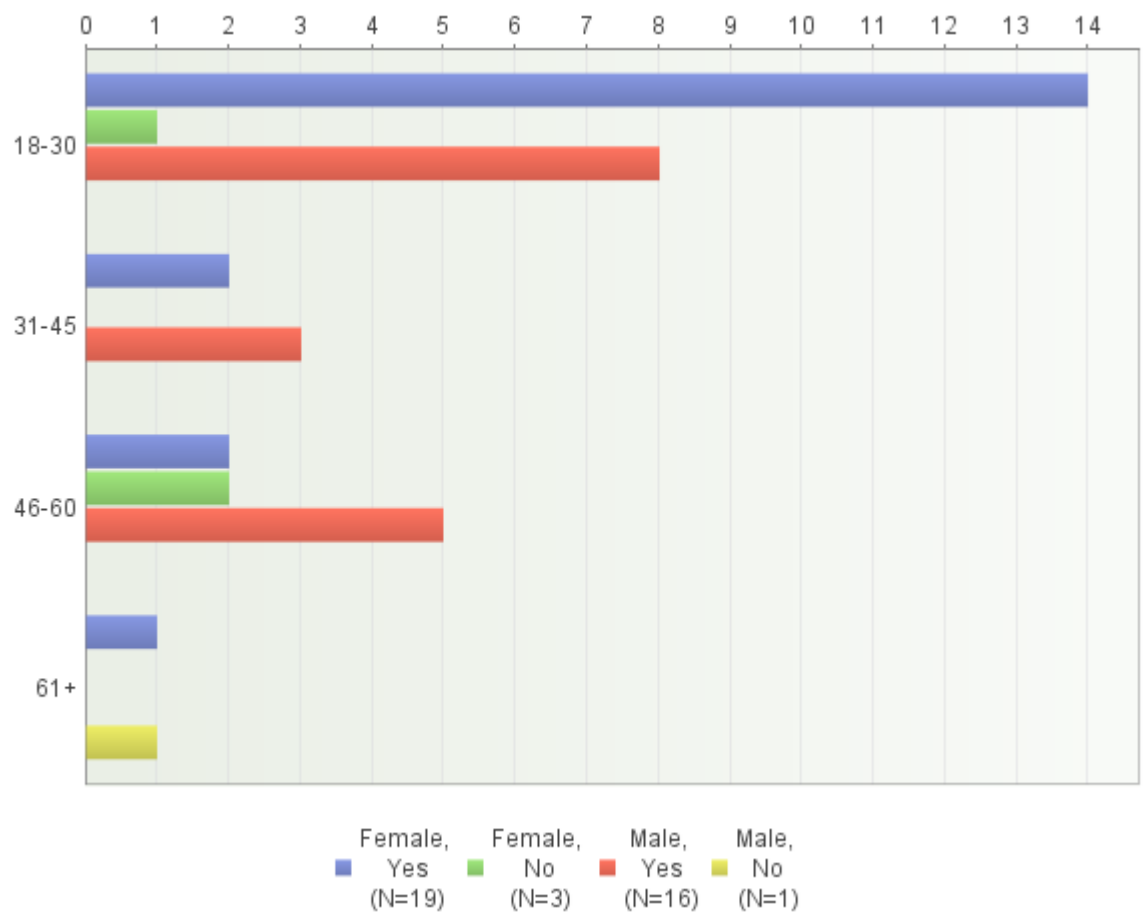


Table 4. Do you know where Finland is located? (Age division)

According to table 3 there wasn't any big difference between men and women on their knowledge of the location of Finland. Table 4 shows that 3 female respondents from 18-30 group and 46-60 group and 1 male respondent from 61+ group did not know where Finland is located.

The eight question: Circle the option you think best describes your opinion about Finland represents the division between men and women on how they feel about certain statements about Finland.

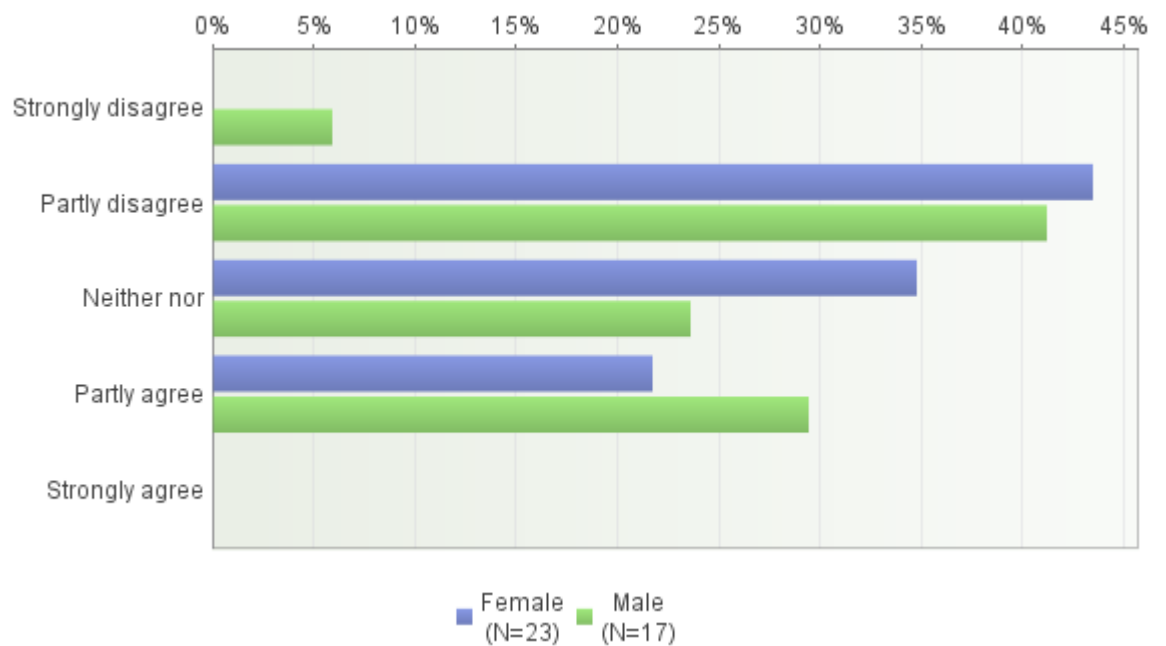


Table 5. Climate in Finland is pleasant

The first statement, climate in Finland is pleasant was partly disagreed by 42.5% of the respondents and 2.5% strongly disagreed. 30% didn't have any idea about the weather conditions and 25% partly agreed. No one strongly agreed with this statement.

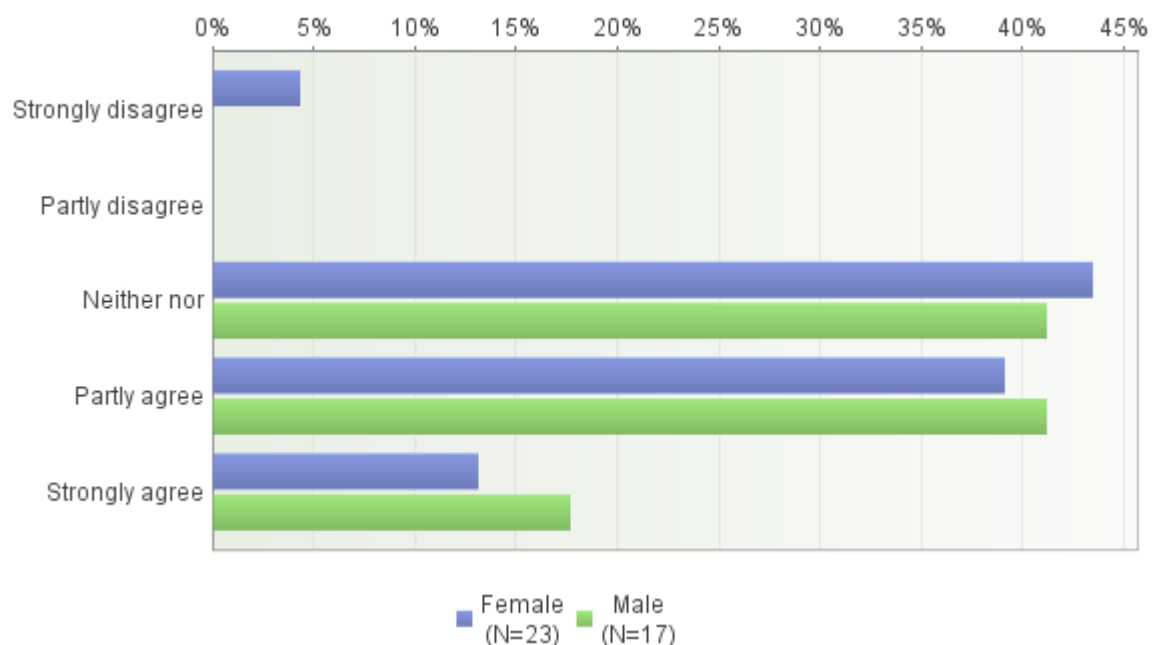


Table 6. Finland has a good public transportation

From all of the respondents 42.5% responded neither nor and 40% partly agreed with the statement. 15% strongly agreed and only 2.5% strongly disagreed. Finland has in-

teresting architecture; 37.5% of the respondents said neither nor whereas 50% partly agreed and 12.5% strongly agreed with the statement.

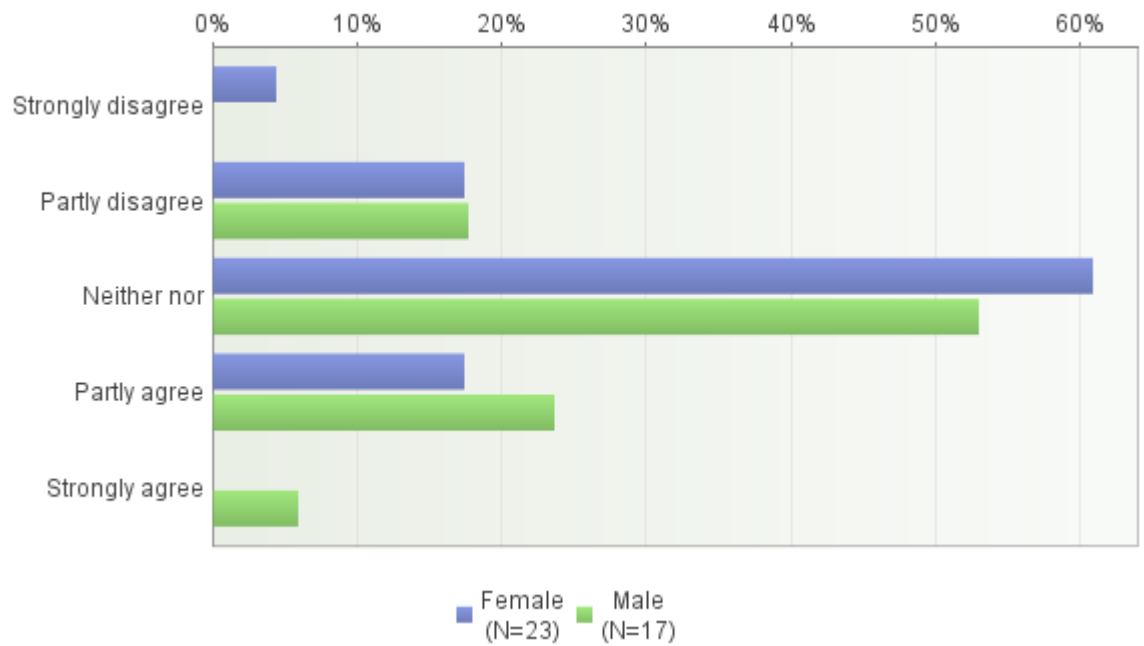


Table 7. Finland provides appealing cuisine

2.5% strongly disagreed and 17.5% partly disagreed with this statement. The majority (57.5%) didn't have opinion about it. 20% partly agreed and 2.5% strongly agreed.

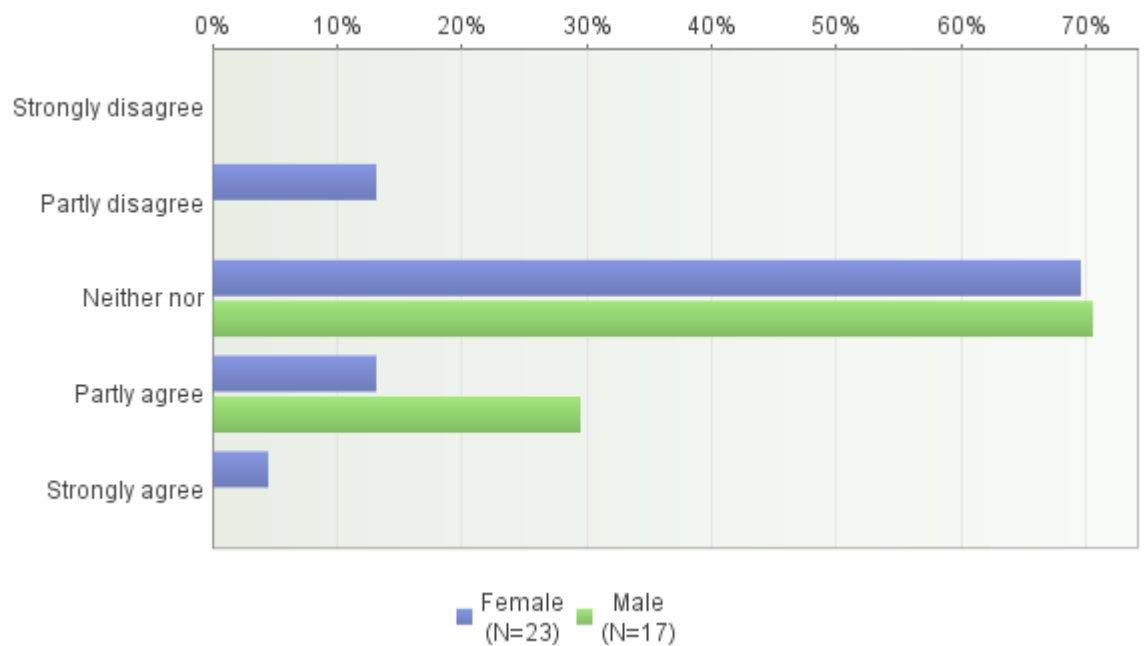


Table 8. Finland has good shopping possibilities

Most of the respondents (70%) didn't have any knowledge about this. They were equally both men and women. 7.5% partly disagreed when 20% partly agreed. Only 2.5% strongly agreed and they were men. More women partly agreed and few men partly disagreed.

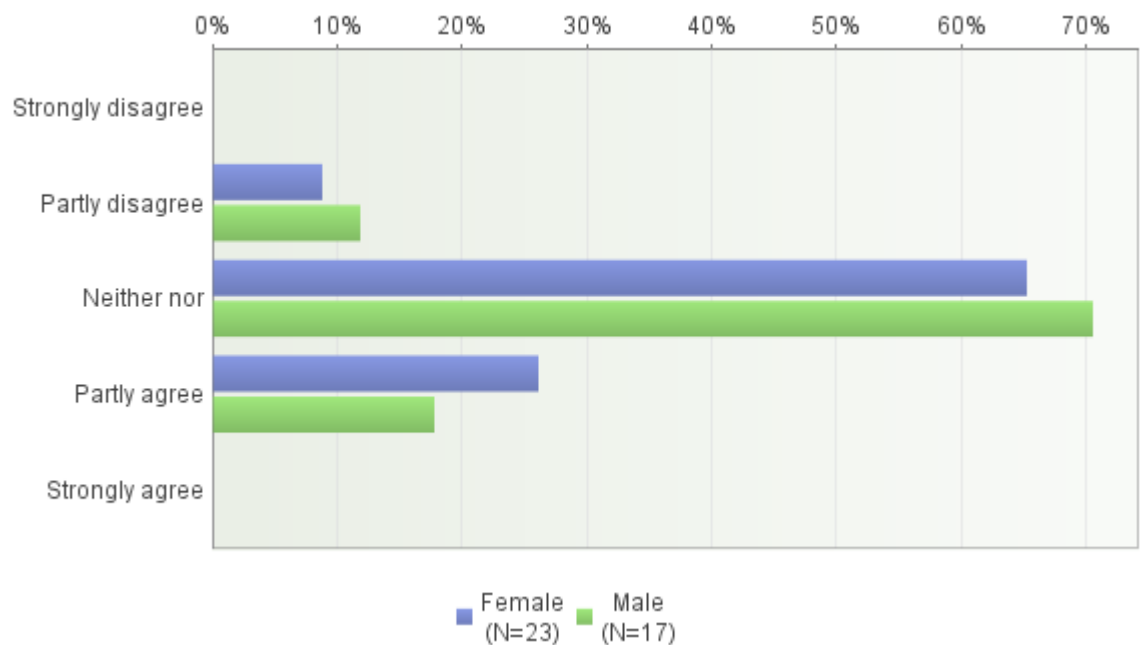


Table 9. Finland has lots of events

10% partly disagreed and 67.5% said neither nor. 22.5% partly agreed with this one. There weren't any major differences between men and women.

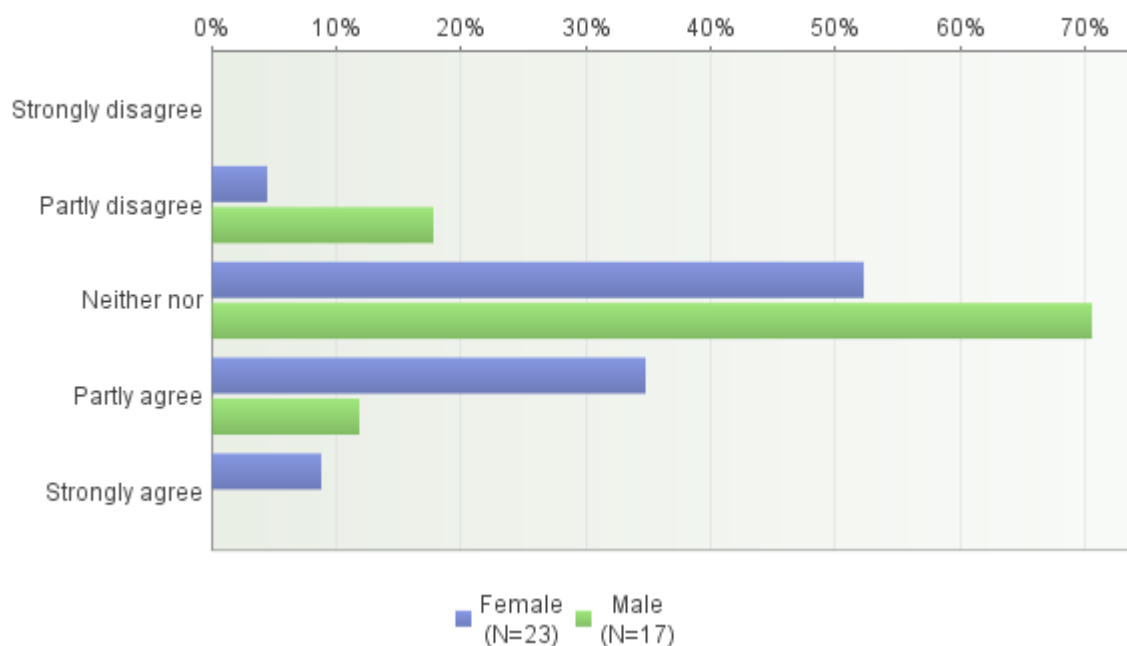


Table 10. Finland has a vibrant nightlife

10% partly disagreed whereas 25% partly agreed and 5% strongly agreed. Total of 60% did not have an opinion. Men had more positive outlook on the nightlife in Finland than women.

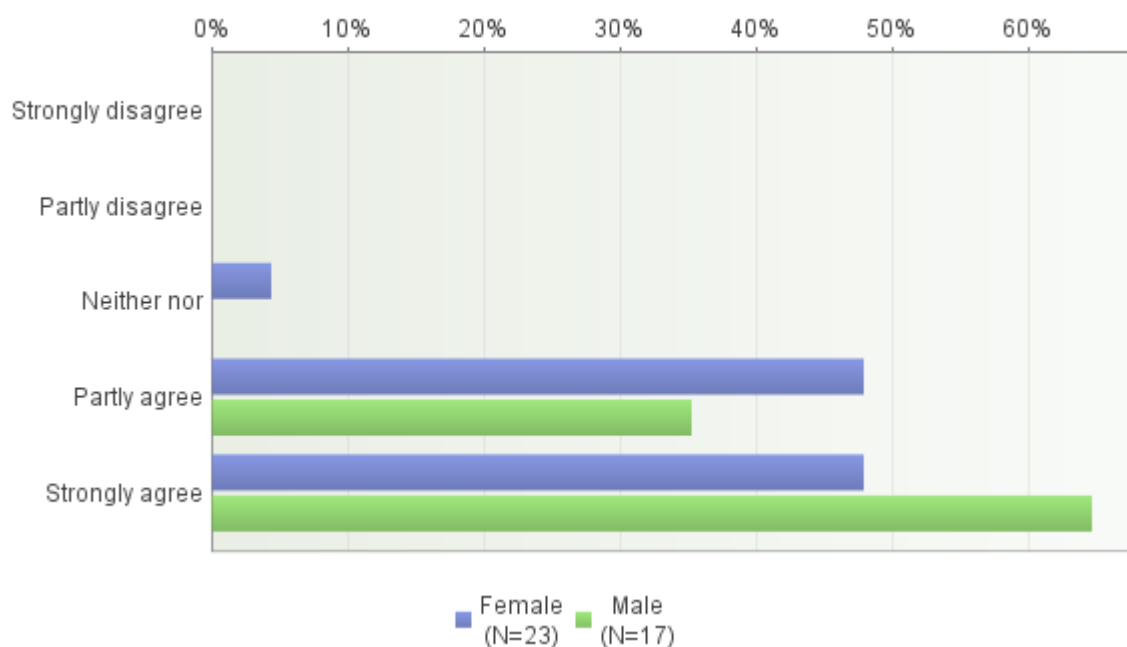


Table 11. Finland is a safe country

2.5% said neither nor. However 42.5% partly agreed and 55% strongly agreed.

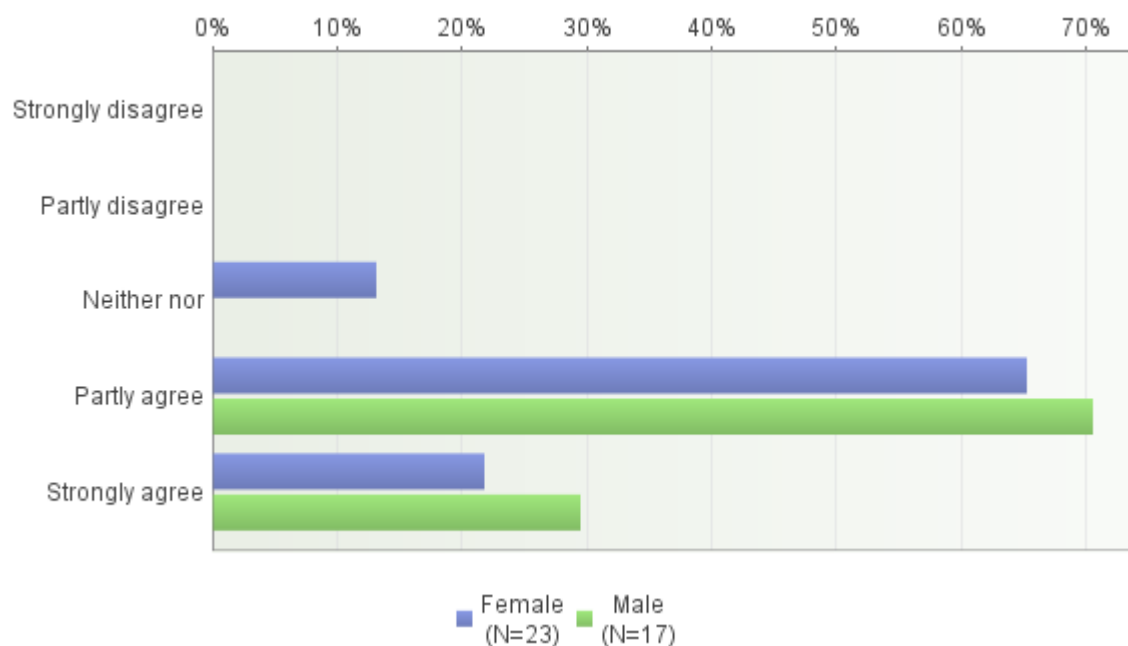


Table 12. Finnish people are friendly

7.5% said neither nor whereas 67.5% partly agreed and 25% strongly agreed. Few men responded neither nor whereas women gave more positive answers to this question.

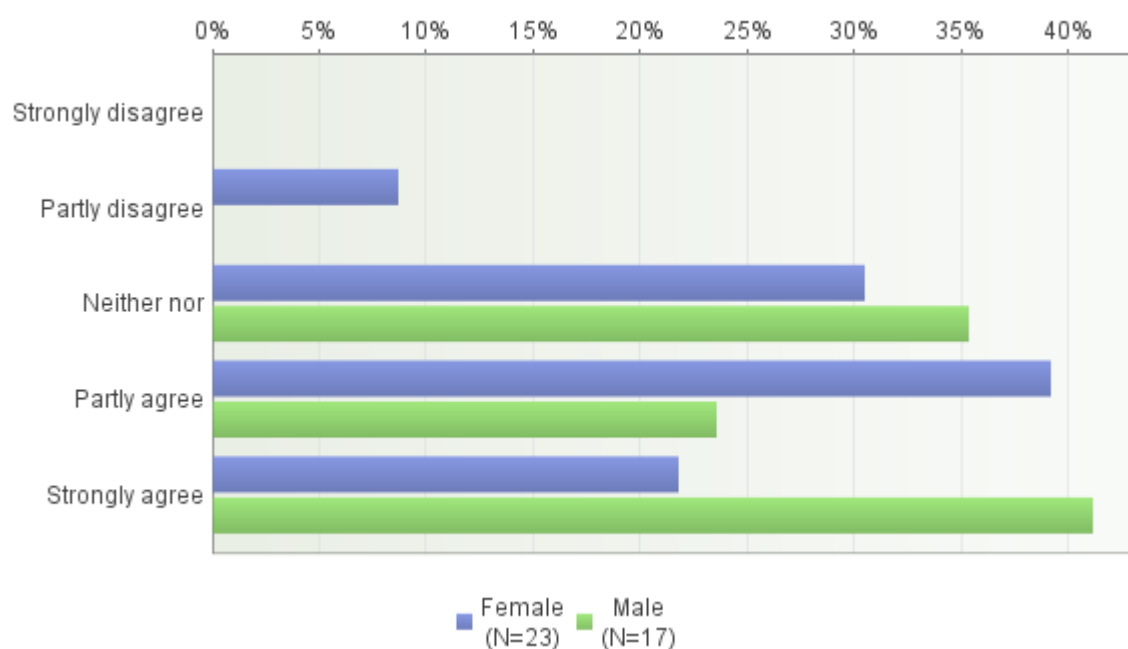


Table 13. Finland is a tolerant country

5% partly disagreed, 32.5% responded neither nor and 32.5% partly agreed. 30% saw Finland as a tolerant country. Partly agree and strongly agree responses were quite opposite between men and women. Only men responded partly disagree to this question.

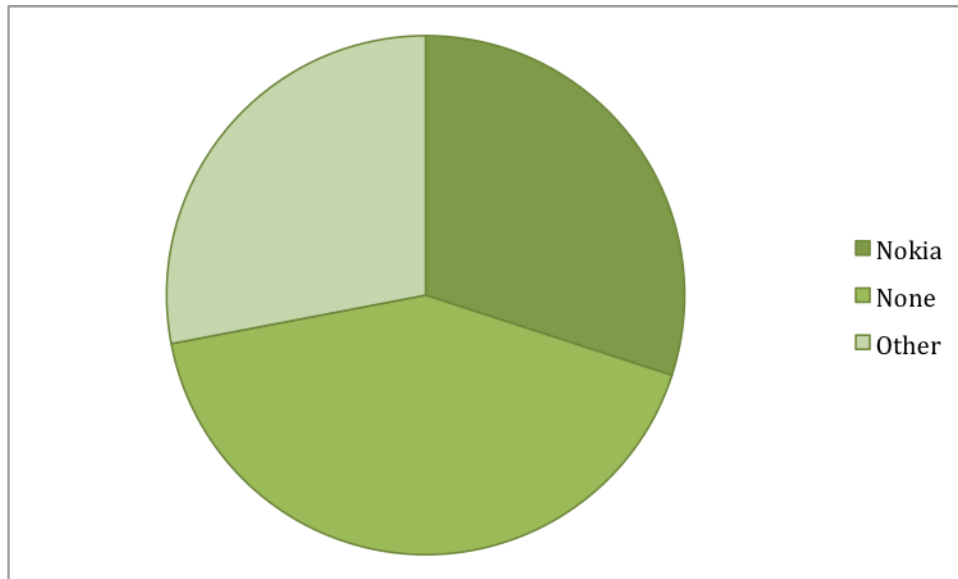


Table 14. Can you name any Finnish companies?

According to our results, Finnish companies are not that well known and over half of the people who answered our survey, did not know any Finnish companies as shown in the table above. Out of the 40 people that answered the questionnaire 22 people could not name any Finnish companies. Nokia was the most known company with 15 mentions. Provoke, ED-Design, Marimekko and Alma Media were all mentioned once. One respondent remembered a Finnish escalator company, but couldn't name it. One respondent identified the Swedish company IKEA as being Finnish.

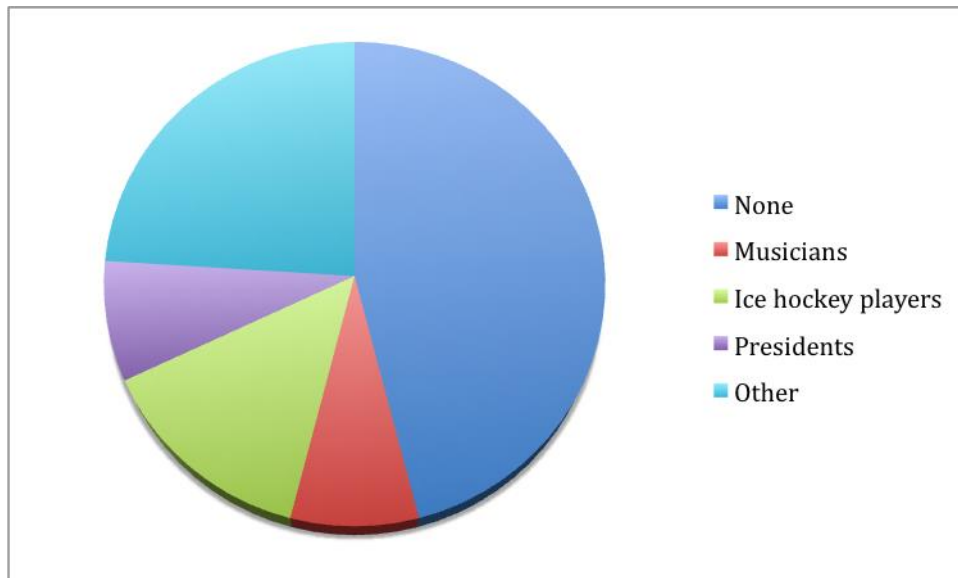


Table 15. Can you name any Finnish persons?

Half of the people who responded could not name any Finnish people they knew. However, 17 people could name one or more famous Finns. Teemu Selänne was the most known person with six mentions. Martti Ahtisaari was mentioned three times. Kimi Räikkönen, Tarja Halonen, Saku Koivu, Tuukka Rask (goalie) and HIM (band) got two mentions each. The following people and bands were mentioned once: Jari Kurri, Kalle Palander, Olli Jokinen, Mikko Koivu, Arto Saari (skateboarder), Maila Nurmi (Vampira), Nightwish, Lordi, Rasmus and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

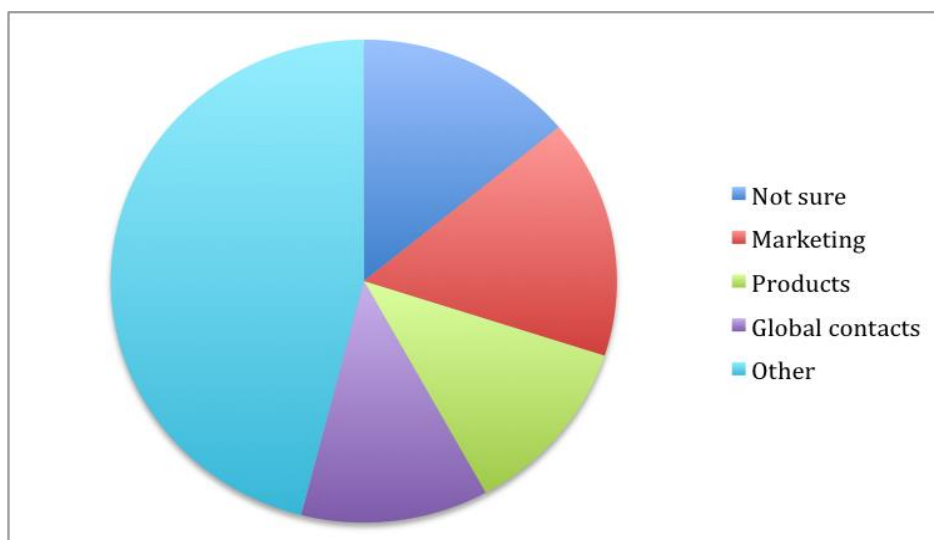


Table 16. What in your opinion might be what Finland is lacking when it comes to expanding their business activity more globally?

This was an open blank question which gave the respondents more opportunities to answer in a longer matter. Ten out of respondents did not have any specific ideas on how Finland could approve its visibility in global markets or said that they do not have enough knowledge on Finnish economy to give advice. Within the rest 30 people that gave an answer, 23 people said that Finland needs to market itself and its products more. More than five people also mentioned that Finland needs to take more active and aggressive role in marketing its companies and products. Three people said that Finland needs a signature product that it needs to identify with, like Sweden does with IKEA and Volvo. The main problem seems to be that even if people know some Finnish products, they do not know that they are from Finland. It was also mentioned that Finland needs to distinguish itself clearly from Sweden and that Finnish companies need to learn the ways of international markets and make good contacts. Focusing on tourism and hospitality was also suggested. Finland's geographical location was seen as an obstacle in four answers. 37 respondents thought it was important for small countries such as Finland to work towards getting more worldwide recognition. Three people did not feel that such a thing is important.

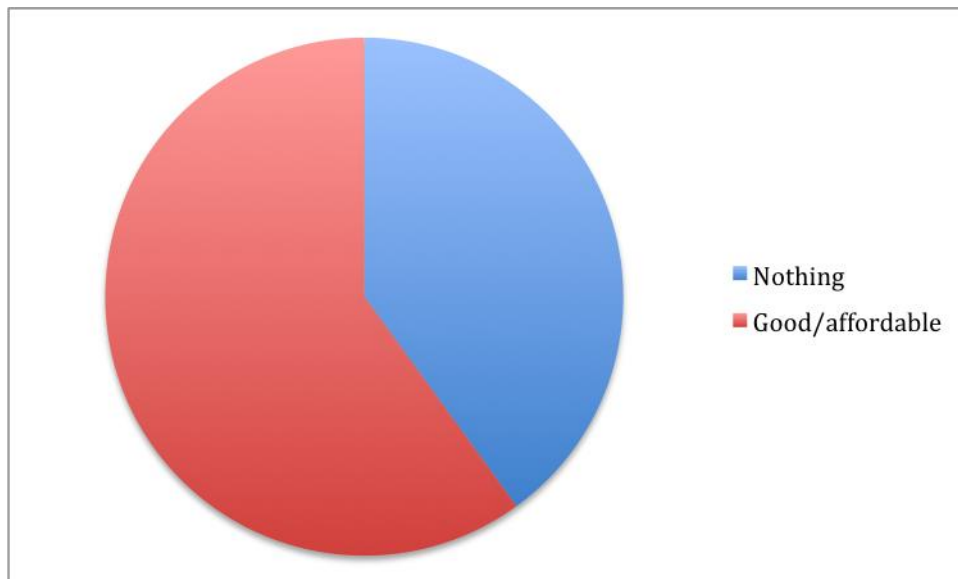


Table 17. What do you know about Finnish education and healthcare systems?

Fifteen respondents said they have no knowledge on either healthcare or education systems. 25 respondents identified that Finland had a great and effective education and healthcare system and most of them also knew that they are free to citizens. Those

who did not give long answers did mention however, that they think the Finnish systems were better than their US counterparts.

"I believe I am correct in saying that Finland offers universal healthcare to its citizens and that higher education is much more affordable (than the US), if not also free. Teachers are also better trained and better compensated, leading to higher teaching standards and thus, a much better overall education system."
(Direct quote from respondent)

6 Analysis

The research was executed in a fairly small scale and the time for collecting the interviews was limited. People in Los Angeles drive everywhere and unlike other cities it is harder to spot people walking around. The ones we managed to find were quite busy or didn't want to participate because of their lack of knowledge. Younger people were more eager to take a part of this research. Also the places where there are many people, most of them are tourists, therefore we tried to avoid those locations and go to places where we could meet the real Californians.

The questionnaire followed a pattern, and the results showed that most respondents had fairly similar ideas of Finland and its image. The validity of the research can be based on the fact that the questionnaire was standardized and each respondent was given the same information concerning the questionnaire. We approached people on the street on a random basis, handing out questionnaires without pre-screening them beforehand. By not interviewing the respondents directly but instead giving the questionnaires for them to fill out themselves, validity of the research stayed consistent and the interviewer did not have an influence on the answers. The age distribution is emphasized more towards younger adults, which slightly affects the validity, since younger people had more knowledge about Finland.

Overall the questionnaire survey measured what it was supposed to measure. The results showed residents' basic perceptions about Finland and its business brand visibility among regular people. Questionnaire was quite short, which is why it didn't allow the researchers to analyze the subject more profoundly.

Based on our research, residents of Los Angeles have heard of Finland but are not well aware of what products and services Finland may offer. Finland is seen as a safe and tolerant country and most of the respondents have a positive image towards Finnish people. Public transportation is also considered to be good, which might be because Los Angeles has a very limited public transportation system of their own.

All the cultural and tourism related things in Finland such as events, nightlife, cuisine and shopping possibilities were unknown for most of the respondents. Only significantly negative feature was the climate. Respondents felt it is not pleasant because of the cold weather and snow. Perhaps because most people may not know about the Finnish summer since the marketing of Finland has been focusing on the winter image for years.

Most respondents felt that marketing is the reason why Finland isn't more globally known. With enhancement of marketing for its country image and products, Finland has the potential to succeed in international markets. This shows the importance of actions such as the Team Finland work.

Finnish education and healthcare systems have gotten quite a lot of attention in the US within the past few years and Finland is getting more attention through articles related to these topics. Especially in the United States where the new healthcare system, known as Obamacare, is just starting out and people are looking for examples from European countries, such as Finland, where universal healthcare already exists.

The biggest issue with the lack of knowledge seems to be with Finnish companies and products, which were not well known at all. Only Nokia seemed to have a specifically Finnish brand that was strong enough to be recognized. The biggest issue the respondents had with Finnish industry and economics was the lack of marketing and promoting. It seems that Finland and Finnish companies are having a marketing problem where their products are not known worldwide or at least are not being identified as Finnish even if the products are otherwise recognized. Finnish companies need more straightforward international marketing strategies and knowledge on how to function in a wider scale market. The need for stronger branding for companies to be identified as Finnish is also evident. Finnish companies should also differentiate themselves from other Nordic companies and make it known they are representing Finnish work quality.

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Attachment 1.

Finland Image Research in Los Angeles, California.

1. Sex ☐ Female ☐ Male
2. Age ☐ 18-30 ☐ 31-45 ☐ 46-60
☐ 61+
3. Social status (household) In a relationship ☐ Yes ☐ No
Children living at home ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Occupation ☐ Student ☐ Working ☐ Unem-
ployed ☐ Retired ☐ Other
5. Do you know where Finland is located? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Have you ever visited Finland? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Circle the option you think best describes your opinion about Finland:

	Strongly dis- agree	Partly dis- agree	Neither nor	Partly agree	Strongly agree
The climate in Finland is pleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Finland has good public transportation	1	2	3	4	5
Finland has interesting architecture	1	2	3	4	5
Finland provides appealing cuisine	1	2	3	4	5
Finland has good shopping possibilities	1	2	3	4	5

Finland has lots of events	1	2	3	4	5
Finland has a vibrant nightlife	1	2	3	4	5
Finland is a safe country	1	2	3	4	5
Finnish people are friendly	1	2	3	4	5
Finland is a tolerant country	1	2	3	4	5

9. What comes to your mind first about Finland?

10. Can you name any known Finnish companies?

11. Can you name any known Finnish persons? (Any field of work)

12. Do you think there's an importance for small countries such as Finland to work towards being more recognized worldwide?

13. What in your opinion might be what Finland is lacking on when it comes to expanding their business activity more globally?

14. What do you know about Finnish education and healthcare systems?

Additional comments

Thank you for your contribution!